

County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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BRYCE YOKOMIZO
Director



April 8, 2004

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

Board of Supervisors
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Third District

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Fifth District

**SUBJECT: ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) COUNTYWIDE
IMPLEMENTATION**

This is to provide you with a final report on our Countywide implementation of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). The EBT system eliminates the use of Food Stamp coupons in Los Angeles County. Your Board also authorized the use of Electronic EBT cards to access cash benefits at over 5,000 ATMs and other point of sale locations throughout the County.

After successfully completing a five-month EBT pilot in two of our district offices, we began the first phase of Countywide implementation on February 1, 2004, adding 14 districts to the EBT system. In March, we added the last 15 districts to the system, successfully bringing the County's total population on EBT to nearly 300,000 cases in 31 district offices.

In February and March, we repeated the same outreach efforts used to assist participants during the EBT pilot. DPSS line staff were deployed to a total of about 300 EBT locations to assist participants using the EBT card at automated teller machines (ATMs), check cashers and other retailers. That staff was able to immediately troubleshoot inquiries and provide resolution to participants. We also set up a Central Command Center, staffed by State, DPSS and EBT contracted personnel, to resolve reported issues/concerns.

Despite the magnitude of the project, the two-month implementation was problem-free and very successful. Below is a chart describing the Food Stamps and cash benefit activities for participants in all 31 district offices during March 2004, the first month of full County implementation.

	FOOD STAMPS	CASH
Total Amount Deposited	\$63M	\$102M
Total Amount Accessed	\$59M	\$101M

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EBT has been a win-win for both participants and retailers.

- Participants like using the card (instead of coupons) at the grocery store and they like getting their cash benefits at a variety of places, not just at check cashers. They find the system easy to use (just like an ATM card) and less costly than before. The average surcharge amount in March to access benefits for a family of three (\$704) was \$2.48 compared to \$13 under the old payment system.
- Retailers are also pleased with the system. They have no more accounting issues with coupons and they are reimbursed electronically within one to two business days.

Overall, we are very pleased with EBT's implementation.

BY:fw

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors